FORTY YEARS OF DRAMA IN WIMBORNE

Tr was in November, 1928, that a group of enthusiasts decided to form the Wimborne Dramatic Society: so be Wimborne Drama Club in its forthcoming present of "The Shop at Sly Corner" in November may be as celebrating; as its more or less lineal described to the Alth birthday.

Of course, there may have been drama clubs of sorts before this date, but if there were

ratio Society in the years of this century century of this century can finally expired (the old toria Hall being taken over the King & Head Hotel) in early 20's.

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So one Is delighted to wellcome a musical re-emergence
by the newly formed Light
Opera Company through the inprivation of the enthusiastic
Mr. Ray Aplin. Long may it
lourish.

EARLY DAYS

But to return to the Wimbonne Dramatic Society started in 1925. Those early days were generally plain sailing—no television, no counter distractions on any scile, a nucleus of "fans" for encouragement. Our first procession was "Ambrose Apple In Adventure," cast about 40 —most of them "pirates" A folly good show the procession was "Ambrose Apple In Adventure," cast about 40 —most of them "pirates" A folly good show "pirates" and the most of them "pirates" about 40 —most of them "pirates" about 40 —most of them part of the Market of

INTO THE 30's

The Society grew and grew, and there followed, right into the 30's, a regular succession of productions, twice a season, mostly for three nights, and a series of monthly "At Homes" (jolly informal occasions) to give experience in One Acters to our, younger members.

One recalls, with perhaps pre-judiced affection, "Outward Bound," "Pygmalion," "Berke-ley Square," "This Happy Breed."

The Society began to get organised. Our first president was Mr. C. le Fleming, musician and composer, son of Dr. le Fleming, antiquary, medical chief of the B.M.A. and general benefactor of the town.

There was no lack of helpers:
Mr. G. H. Watson, local historian, who loaned us part of his premises for rehearsal and storage; Miss Hilda Coles (Priest's House Museum) who had a genius for stage managing a cramped and tiny stage, Mr. Wilkinson with his lighting expertise.

We rehearsed all over the place: Oddfellow's Hall, room at the George and above the Co-op in New Borough till Mr. Watson came to our aid. We were indeed wandering players—vagabonds they would have called us in Tudor times. And then Night fell.

AFTER THE WAR

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Sterner matters to attend to, he eruptive years, 1939 to 1945, of necessity saw us dormant. But in 1946, although many of our original membership had now been dispersed, an attempt was made at revival. The old W.I. Hall still stood, a bit more battered and, with Mr. Watson as our President, we were soon at it again with successful productions of "The Dover Road," "The Linden Tree, "The Holly and the Ivy," "When We were Married," "Saloon

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NO TAKEOVER

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Meanwhile the ever-optimistic Mr. H. Parrish had revived opera in Wimborne, and under his expert guidance à series of G. and S. successes—Pinafore, Pirafes, Mikado, Gondohers—were duly staged at the old W.I. Hall.

But presenting opera requires much cash, so a mutual working partinership was suggested. So we became à minor branch of the Wimborne Amateur Operatic and Dramaitic Society, our job being to raise money for the high cost of putting on the operas.

The arrangement lasted a few seasons, but, far from making money, we proceeded steadily to lose it. And so there followed a sad though friendly parting. Soon, the Opera folded, and we became the Wimborne Drama Cho.

NEW PASTURES

Then we watched sadly as the demolition squads got to work on the old W.I. Hall. Not that there was much to demolishment of the pose even they can demolish spacious half and desired the proses of the proper even they can demolish spacious half and demolish spacious half and demolish spacious half and demolish school in the middle 50's. It is delightful to act on this stage and we achieved some notable settings and productions here. Even so, it is all very well to try to act on a delightful stage if there be but few to take notice. Each production registered a heavy loss.

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So, gasping for cash, and no cash coming, in 1988 we seemed to lie down and die, and for two years there were no productions.

Meanwhile there had been a brief interlude of glory. In 1951 came the Festival of Britain and Wimborne Urban District Council, as part of its celebrations, sponsored a pageant in the Recreation Ground; an imaginary visit of Queen Elizabeth I to Merley House and a display for her entertainment. The pageant was written and directed by one of the club's producers. There were tenpisodes, most of which were produced by club members and many organisations took part—the Women's Institute, the Council, the Grammar School, Convent School, Toc H and others.

The cast—a real team effort.

others.

The cast—a real team effort
—numbered more than 400.
The affair was generally voted
a triumph. Moreover—it did
not rain!

* REVIVAL

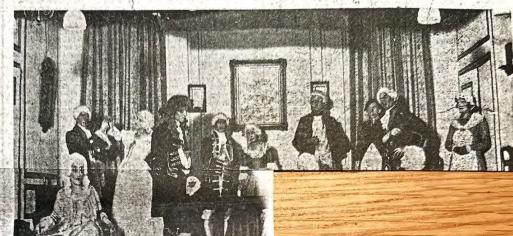
Now the revival. Approaches for our joining with the Broadstone Players not materialising, we watched and waited.

In 1960 came revival. From the W.I. Hall the club had bought some lighting and stage equipment which, with the co-operation of the Church House Authorities was installed, and the stage slightly enlarged. Air Marshal Sir John Bradley became our encouraging president, and Mr. Young our chairman, followed in 1964 by Mr. Henbest.

In spite of the difficulties of a tiny stage and limited seating accommodation, and more recent problems of being prevented from advertising our shows through alleged fire prevented from inadequacies (our performances are now technically "parties"—coffee provided), the club staged a succession of mostly light and amusing plays, gradually building up a small but growing clientele.



two pictures give glimpses of former productions by Wimborne Dramatic Society. Above, "Ambrose Applejoin's Adventure presented in October, 1932, and, bottom picture, "Berkeley Square" which was staged in October, 1933.



Must Fall" and "The Importance

Must Fall" and 'The Importance of being Earnest.'

So the Club approaches its 40th birthday with reasonable confidence, a confidence that whatever success may have been achieved in the past was gained through genuine team work, and that this team work still continues, coloured, perhaps, by the sad reflection that there is unfortunately no stage or hall in Wimborne itself in which full justice can be done to a play.

which full justice can be under to a play.

In the 20's such a hall could have been built for a few hun-dred pounds. Now, it would cost the "earth"—even if the earth were available in the town to build it on. * * *

Mr. Leonard Mottram, who has written this short history of the Wimborne Dramatic Society, is the original "Quarter Jack," whose successor now writes in the "Journal." Mr. Mottram wrote the column round about 1935 for the "Southern Journal," a paper which is no longer in being. He was the original chairman of the drama group and staged the productions in the early days.

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